



Lisa Murkowski

U.S. Senator - Alaska

CAMPING BY CHITNA CREEK

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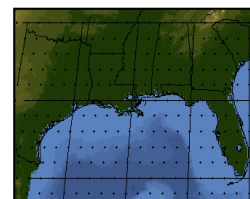
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In the past ten days, the country has faced one of its largest natural disasters -- Hurricane Katrina. The images coming out of the Gulf Coast are overwhelming as we continue to learn more about the extent of the destruction and devastation. I know that I share with all Alaskans deep and heartfelt sympathy for Hurricane Katrina victims and their families.



This week, Congress returned from August recess and immediately began addressing the needs of the Gulf region as it begins the long road to recovery. So far, we have approved more than \$60 billion in relief funding and that is just the beginning before reconstruction can begin.



Clearly there were local, state and federal government failures in preparing for and responding to such a large disaster. We need to know what went wrong with the National Response and Disaster Relief Plan and fix it. We also must rebuild confidence among the American people -- all the American people -- in our government's ability to protect them from disaster -- whether it comes from nature or terrorists.

ALASKANS COME TOGETHER TO HELP...

As usual in times of national crisis, Alaskans have distinguished themselves and donated money, clothing, supplies and construction equipment to the Hurricane Katrina relief effort. A group of women on the Kenai is sending homemade quilts to the victims, Alaska's fishermen have reached out to help their fellow fishermen, and I know of a businessman who has donated a million dollars of housing and a portable hospital. There are countless other examples of individual generosity by Alaskans.

Even before the total damage from the storm had been realized, Alaska's fishermen were reaching out to their brothers and sisters in the Gulf. The United Fisherman of Alaska, one of the nation's largest commercial fishing groups, has extended offers of support to the Southern Shrimp Alliance (SSA) and its more than 500 members in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The offer of support includes gear, apparel and logistical support to SSA, which is made up of shrimp boat, dock and business owners in eight states spanning the Gulf and South Atlantic coasts. Currently, UFA is working with SSA, my office, and other organizations to tally a list of pressing items needed.



HOW TO HELP WITH HURRICANE RELIEF...

American Red Cross - 1-800-HELP NOW (435-7669) English, 1-800-257-7575 Spanish or www.redcross.org;

Salvation Army - 1-800-SAL-ARMY (725-2769) or www.salvationarmyusa.org

907-376-7665
Fax 907-376-8526

Bethel Delegation Office
P.O. Box 1030
311 Willow Street
Building 3
Bethel, AK 99559
907-543-1639
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EXAMINING THE PRICE OF GAS...

Aside from the human toll that has been paid as a result of Hurricane Katrina, the country is seeing other effects such as the rising price of gasoline. This week, I took part in an Energy Committee hearing to examine the short term outlook for gas and home heating oil and to find out what can be done to address the escalating prices.

Right now, Americans are paying \$288 million a day more for gasoline than we did at this point last year and a billion dollars more than we did three years ago. The rise in gas prices following Katrina--the national average reached \$3.06 over the Labor Day weekend--has resulted in large part due to a reduction in Gulf region refinery capabilities.

We must ask ourselves if centralizing such a large portion of the nation's energy supply and refinery capability in one location makes sense. And we must remember that had ANWR production been authorized 10 years ago, we would have another source for domestic energy online. This hearing was an important first step towards addressing a problem affecting the entire country.

CREATING AWARENESS OF FASD...

Today, Sept. 9, is International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. Every year in the United States, an estimated one in every 100 babies are born with FASD – approximately 40,000 infants a year. Approximately 163 Alaskan babies are born each year affected by maternal alcohol use during pregnancy. No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy – FASD is 100 percent preventable.

Soon, I plan to introduce legislation that would develop and implement targeted state and community-based outreach programs to create awareness of and combat FASD. Our investment today in FASD prevention, treatment and research will create awareness and save countless amounts in future health costs of this devastating but completely preventable disorder.

REMEMBERING MATTHEW BOHLING...

We learned this week that Sgt. Matthew Charles Bohling, 22, of Eagle River is the third Alaskan to be killed in Iraq. Sgt. Bohling served in the army for four years, enlisting just after graduating from Chugiak High School. Bohling was with the A Company of the 69th Armored Regiment in the 3rd Infantry Division based in Fallujah, Iraq and was killed as he drove a Humvee vehicle with American and Iraqi troops. I extend my sympathy to Sgt. Bohling's family and friends and thank him for paying the ultimate price in service to our country.

LOSS OF A CHIEF...

In the midst of the focus on the hurricane, the country also lost its Chief Justice. I join with my colleagues in expressing my deepest sympathy to Chief Justice Rehnquist's family. For 33 years, Chief Justice Rehnquist honorably served Americans on the United States Supreme Court. I know that he will be greatly missed for his intelligence, fairness, conviction, humor and jovial nature.

The Senate will begin confirmation hearings next week on the nomination of Appeals Court Judge John Roberts to be the next Chief Justice. The Senate also will welcome Juneau Mayor Bruce Botelho to testify at the hearing. As former Attorney General of Alaska, Botelho worked closely with Roberts when he represented Alaska during cases under review by the Supreme Court.

The President believes Judge Roberts has the integrity and credentials to serve as the leader of our nation's highest court. With two vacancies on the Supreme Court, I believe it is important that a Chief Justice be in place when the new term begins in October.



Senator Murkowski presides over the vote on the resolution to honor the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist

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